(a) whether it is a fact that the movement of wheat for export by road has been banned with effect from 1st August, 2003;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether it is also a fact that exporters have been persistently facing severe shortage of railway rakes for transporting foodgrains across the country, hampering speedy and timely delivery of export orders to their destinations; and

(d) if so, the details of special initiatives taken to make railway rakes easily accessible to exporters for transportation of foodgrains?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA): (a) to (d) Due to widespread drought priority was accorded in allocation of railway rakes for meeting requirements of Public Distribution System (PDS) and other welfare schemes.

Keeping in view the above aspect, it was decided to allow road movement of wheat for export purposes with effect from 13th February, 2003. This was extended from time to time upto 10th August, 2003.

Decline in procurement of foodgrains

3062. MS. PRAMILA BOHIDAR:
SHRI B.J. PANDA:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that during the current season there is a decline in procurement of rice and other foodgrains;

(b) if so, the details of shortfall;

(c) whether it is due to failure of monsoon in Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Chhattisgarh and Bihar; and

(d) to what extend it would fall short of domestic consumption and whether this would necessitate imports to make up the shortfall?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA): (a) Yes, Sir/Madam.

(b) A quantity of 161.65 lakh tonnes of rice (including paddy in terms of rice) has been procured upto 14.8.2003 in the current Kharif Marketing Season 2002-2003 as against 221.29 lakh tonnes procured in the last Kharif Marketing Season 2001-2002 and 158.02 lakh tonnes of wheat has been procurred in the Rabi Marketing Season 2003-2004 compared to 190.24 lakh tonnes procured during the previous Rabi Marketing Season 2002-2003.

(c) The procurement of foodgrains has declined during the current Kharif/Rabi Marketing Season due to a number of factors *viz.* drought conditions in most of the paddy producing States, including Andhra Pradesh, Orissa and Chhattisgarh, fall in production of foodgrains and open market prices ruling at par or higher than the Minimum Support Prices.

(d) The Government has sufficient stock of wheat and rice to meet the demand of consumption of foodgrains under the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) and other Welfare Schemes. As such, there is no need to import foodgrains to meet the requirement.

Disposal of old foodgrains

3063. SHRI RAMACHANDRA KHUNTIA: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the total quantity of wheat stock in FCI godowns, which is of the period 1998-99, State-wise and Depot-wise;

(b) whether this wheat of 1998 and 1999 is edible; and

(c) the fresh steps taken by Government to dispose off this wheat in order to ensure that it is sold before it begins to rot?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI SUBHASH MAHARIA): (a) As reported by the Food Corporation of India (FCI) there was a total stock of 37,550 MT of wheat pertaining of crop year 1998-99 in its godowns as on 1st July, 2003. The State-wise and Depot-wise details of these stocks are at Statement (*See* below).

(b) Yes, Sir.